

Getting rid of the Shame and the Shit #3

*Self-Explorations on Inherited Oppressions and Ways of
Resistance*

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*Thoughts on: Relationships Free of Abuse and Manipulation,
but Full of Solidarity // Coping with Couples That Interfere
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Maintaining Passionate Connections While Redefining
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[Confessions of a Polit Sexual]

How is Trust Possible? The Issue of Power Dynamics
(Most Often too Idealistic) Thoughts on Relationships Free of
Abuse and Manipulation, but Full of Solidarity

'Performing Distance'

Thoughts on Coping with Couples That Interfere With Your own
Close Relationships

From Various Crushes to Committed Friendships

Thoughts on Starting and Maintaining Passionate Connections
While Redefining Intentions

***Small Manifesto. An Homage to our Friendships // Kleines
Manifesto. Eine Hommage an unsere Freund*innenschaften***

Trying to Grasp how we Live our Lives // Ein Versuch, unsere
Lebensweise*n (zusammen-) fassen zu können

[Love & Politics // Liebe & Politik]

[Confessions of a Polit Sexual]

*Hey, there's something I gotta tell you:
I feel politically attracted to you.*

*Yes, it makes me blush,
it could almost be considered indecent...*

*But I need to tell you anyway:
I'd like to go on a political date with you.*

*Then maybe you're gonna tell me -
can I get my hopes up for us, politically?*

*Something could evolve between you and me,
maybe a political couple-relationship?*

*Though, better make it a threesome
- politically I am poly.*

... Or you just wanna be in a 'comradeship'??

//

*Du, ich muss dir was sagen:
Ich fühl mich politisch zu dir hingezogen.*

*Ja, es bringt mich etwas in Verlegenheit,
denn ich finde es politisch fast unanständig ...*

*Aber ich sag's dir trotzdem:
Ich hätte gern ein Politdate mit dir.*

*Vielleicht verrätst du mir dann -
kann ich mir bei dir politische Hoffnungen machen?*

*Zwischen uns könnte sich was entwickeln,
eine politische Zweierbeziehung?*

*Oder eher Dreierbeziehung -
politisch bin ich poly.*

... Oder willst du nur 'Genoss_innenschaft'??

How is Trust Possible? The Issue of Power Dynamics

(Most often too Idealistic) Thoughts on Relationships Free of Abuse and Manipulation, but Full of Solidarity

Developing a personal relationship, working on a political project or spending a few days in a hut together: no matter for what kind of cooperation, I need to know how much I can trust you.

(Yes, actually it is more realistic and safe to ask for 'how much' or 'in which respect' than assuming I can only either trust you under all circumstances or not at all, since the first would make me a lot more vulnerable.)

What does trust mean? Does it mean I have to believe you are a nice person? Does it mean I need prove you are not gonna physically hurt or rob me and not gonna lie to my face? Well, that might not be the worst start, but that's not exactly the thing I have in mind.

All places, groups and relationships are influenced by power dynamics between the people involved. They might be constituted by gender, being (not) exposed to racism, income, certified level of education, age, physical ability, legal status, experience, reputation, the ability to express yourself (in a certain language) ... but the list cannot be complete and the relevant factors differ for each situation. Power dynamics cannot be abolished by ignoring or denying them. So what does trust mean in this context?

First of all, trust means that I can experience you do not use your power against me.

This might include: not physically stopping me from leaving a place (*even if it is 'only a joke' – goes for all the following as well*); not trying to force me to do something by putting psychological or moral

pressure on me or talking down to me when I am not willing to agree – like pressuring me to join an event, make me drive the car or drink (more) alcohol; not using your position to make me look bad or talk disrespectful to/about me – e.g. laughing at my opinions or decisions, making fun of what I do, how I look or what I say; not ignoring what I say (especially if it includes a ,NO‘ directed at you) and not belittling my contribution to the conversation, project, group process; not trying to control my decisions.

Secondly, trust in this sense means that I don‘t *expect* you to do these things: that I can imagine and believe you are not going to try that. Either because experience so far showed you didn‘t, and/or due to what I know about the way you behave towards others. Which brings us to:

Thirdly, trust is based on my impression that you don not *want* to use your power against me.

This might be the key point so far: you not using power against me is a good sign, but might be part of bigger power dynamics as well. In other words: you might just have decided that acting nice and respectful towards me is more useful to your position; maybe because I have access to resources you are interested in or because I have reputation and social backup, which would get you in trouble if you‘d clash with me. So: you being nice to me for unknown reasons can still mean you‘re going to use your power against me if conditions change (e.g. when you don‘t need my resources any more or if I lose my reputation). On the other hand, the pure will to be ,nice‘, ,fair‘ or respectful doesn‘t do the trick completely. So we need to have a look at:

Fourthly: Trust is linked to the awareness about specific power dynamics.

These might mean being conscious that: you as a male* perceived person can easily drop your shirt at a concert while I as a female* perceived person must expect heavy boundary-crossing and repression for that; me as a person with citizen rights, I get in less trouble if caught by police on a demonstration than you without these rights; you as a person who focuses on a couple-relationship and me with lots of different social relationships, we have different ,resources‘ for (emotional) support, social bonding, body/sexual contact etc.; me as a person with precarious ,low-time‘ job, I have more time for political education and activism, but less income than you with a full-time job; by my looks I might be less accepted regarding the codes of leftist scenes than the younger, more adjusted antifa guy – but I might know a lot of people in key positions and have a longer history of experience there ...

Expecting you to know some basics about the power bias between us can be basic to my trust in you – as far as I believe in your willingness and ability to deal with them respectfully.

So fifthly and as a (for now) last key point for building trust I can add the expectation of your willingness and ability for respectful communication about these issues.

This might include seemingly ,little‘ things: asking me, if I am o.k. with the situation, if I like your proposal, if I have any other ideas how to do \$whatever; talking before a project/trip or when getting into a relationship about what is important to me, what kind of boundaries need to be considered, what is basic to feel safe/o.k./fine; asking about how I felt at the occasion, if your behavior earlier was alright for me, what my opinion on the topic is, what changes I would like in the way we treat each other. [NO, of course this doesn't mean that women* – or the persons who are less privileged in a situation – cannot speak up for themselves or want to be treated hyper sensitive all the time: it's about the willingness to handle one's own privileges carefully and becoming active, taking responsibility for identifying and changing one's own (dominant) behavior.]

Being open about your own experience, thoughts, needs, feelings

regarding these things. Being open for taking criticism and express critique in a respectful way.

So this is what I consider basic to trust.

We can't just escape power dynamics – they are there and the only way to deal with them is to be honest and aware about them, as much as we are able to.

It's gonna be quite some work and it's not gonna find an end soon; but the effort will allow us to build relationships that are of a quality rarely found – trustworthy relationships that will carry us through personal and political or any other processes. The effort makes it possible for them to become successful, joyful, meaningful.

I don't wanna waste my life time on any other relationships – and I have trust: if we change these dynamics, we're gonna be powerful, together and collectively!

[270215]

'Performing Distance'

Thoughts on Coping with Couples That Interfere With Your own Close Relationships

„Are we going to meet your new girlfriend tonight?“ I ask my friend who I visit for the weekend.

„No, she's busy“ he replies. „Would you have liked to?“

„It depends“ I explain. „Not if it's only the three of us. I'm really not keen on that situation where I sit on the other side of the table, waving at you, smiling like an idiot, assuring *No no, the two of you sit closer together, I'll stay here, or better two more meters away. No no, I don't mind that at all, look how happy and casual I act towards the two of you!*“

My friend stares at me, seemingly even less puzzled than disturbed. I might have exaggerated a bit, but this is exactly how I feel in these situations.

I call it *Performing Distance*.

And he obviously has no idea what I am talking about ...

The difficulty with close friends' partners is not only, that a third party (that you didn't pick) gets to take decisions on the rules of the relationship between you and your friend (by settings dos & don'ts for contact with 'other' people, consciously or not); the problem is that you are – implicitly – asked to respect boundaries you aren't told of *where they are*.

Like it might be ok to share beds when you both are guests somewhere and it'd be the easiest or only option – but it might come off weird to offer your friend staying for a sleep-over at your place when you live close to each other.

Maybe you tend to hold hands when having private talks – but it would be regarded a scandal when you do that in public.

It might be regarded as a non-problematic flirting between friends

when you tell them they are attractive to you – or they might consider you being an insensitive, immoral, rude, unloyal person, especially if you know their partner.

Similar problematics occur if you are interested in a person that you know is in a couple-relationship – they might be in an anyhow open relationship and it could cause a major loss just to assume they can't be interested in you, too, and waste the actual chance of approaching each other; or it might lead to a minor disaster if you address the subject too directly because the other feels bewildered or offended and their partner might feel treated disrespectfully and ignored, leaving you as an insensitive immoral person as well.

So yes,

since I don't know your agreements' nature, how individual they are and in what ways they are arranged,
since I don't know how far all these things concerning contact/intimacy/relationships with 'other' people have been discussed even between the two of you,
since I nor wanna hurt or enrage people nor do I want to take the risk of damaging my relationship to my friend (or my friend's relationship either)

- so yes, I tend to keep the most conventional distance, I try not to cross any line (which is probably much further than I assume, but since nobody did outline it to me, it could be there...),
I want to make sure my message comes off without misunderstandings:

I do do respect your relationship,
I do respect that it comes along with rules I have to follow,
I do respect that it influences, maybe changes, regulates (at least potentially) my friend's and my relationship.

I do it not to be rude and hurtful,
I do it to respect my friend's choices;
I do it to have proof and witness: I'm the good guy here and there's no reason not to trust me, I do all I can to please you, so you don't need to, don't want to, you shouldn't and(!) you can't make me stay away from them, I don't give you any reason to break apart our relationship, I won't hand you the tools for that.

Performing Distance.

It's been my strategy, my tool to fight for my relationships, for a long time.

Smiling at my male friends' girlfriends while staying further than usual away from my friend has been part of the contract as long as I can remember.

(Performing Distance was rarely the only reason for being nice to these girls, most often I really liked them, but hence all of the social dynamics accompanying our meetings, we never really got the chance to just get to know each other on a normal, equal level.)

And yeah, I talk about my male friends' girlfriends, because obviously heteronormativity plays its part in this stories quite well and is a popular ghost writer of these plots. Not that it doesn't happen in other constellations, but I just don't feel the same urgent need to *prove* that I am not trying to be on a competition e.g. with my female friend's new boyfriend. I don't feel controlled or under general suspicion the same way there.

(Which of course also shows the problem that in a major perception same sex relationships – or any relationships other than male/female-relationships – aren't treated equally or as of the same relevance. But I don't have much experience here, at least concerning romantic/couple-relationships.)

So yeah, I spent lots of my lifetime sitting on the other side of the

table, seemingly super happy waving at the person I actually felt closest to – besides for during these moments.

No, it's not the best feeling ever.

But there is reason to that, even if it seems weird or if it does not only good to me.

Yes, it might be better to know where the lines are set.

It might be helpful to ask for each dot, find out about one after another, so I don't have to guess around all the time.

But also it would be lots of work;

we'd find out that the two of you haven't actually agreed on lots of things, but worked with assumptions yourselves;

it might cause trouble between the two of you which might reflect back on me;

anyway it for sure would be some rather confusing talks when I ask you, if you actually have a two-kiss-policy, if I can hug you only for goodbye and hello while your partner is present, if it's weird that I've known your family longer than she does and if I shouldn't show that to her, if we can (still) travel alone together and if it is somehow decent to talk with you about sex (with my new affair? / that you and me used to have?), if I could sleep in underwear next to you or if you would like to accompany me to a friend's wedding (where most of the people will assume you're my boyfriend).

I'd love to know all of that (depending on our situation/relationship of course), I really do.

But I usually don't want to have all the talks that would be necessary to find out about this.

Talks that I would have to initiate.

Because I am the one who doesn't know.

I am the one who doesn't set the rules,

I am the one who doesn't know where exactly the lines are set,

but I am the one who has to be careful not to cross them,

because I might risk our relationship by that, cause then I wouldn't be the nice guy, but the competitive girl, that has to be kept away, at least a bit further.

So I prefer to keep that distance myself, kind of.

And perform it, to show, prove, you don't have to dismiss me (also you're not allowed to, I don't give you the chance to legitimately dismiss me) - I'm the good guy, I'll stay away from him, I'll smile, I'll wave.

Sometimes I hate it.

Sometimes it is the most simple way to deal with that whole mess of social assumptions and rules.

Anyway, don't you worry, this is not about you, or your boyfriend, of course.

Of course it is about somebody else.

[220815]

PS: I also do know the feeling of being in the more 'secure' position when my friend's new partner still has to 'settle their role' and get to know the new surrounding, while I might have been there for years... This doesn't erase the explained issues, but it influences the social power dynamics in these moments. In that case, Performing Distance can also be an attempt to give the new person some space and security.

From Various Crushes to Committed Friendships“

Thoughts on Starting and Maintaining Passionate Connections While Redefining Intentions

Cheers my friend, what a nice night this is.
And while we drink a toast to ourselves, let me tell you a story about the two of us ...

Once I met this person who seemed to be quite nice. I don't remember when or where exactly – they just happened to be around at some point and our ways started crossing more frequently: was it at parties or demonstrations, at friends' or festivals, at university or in between all of that? Who can tell now ...

The somewhat familiar face got connected to a name and became a person that I got to know tiny pieces about; out of each meeting, new pieces – like swapped sentences and looks – were glued to the loose bundle of impressions, as glittering, solid or ominous hints about this person and the stories of their life.

Small, fragile connections were made in this several little moments and they began to build cross-links: that weird thing happened which is called 'getting to know someone'.

Every glimpse made me more curious for the whole picture, every new insight seemed to reveal something new or some new depth. Something between us seemed to build by every of these tiny steps; something vivid seemed to grow and resonate on slightly more levels with each shared moment.

What did I feel, what did I want back then?
I wanted to learn more about that person, get more impressions and find out who they are, what they do, like, think and dream about, find

out about their stories and where they are heading for.

I wanted them to get to know me, get interested, curious in discovering these things about me and my life.

I wanted to spend time with them, share moments, thoughts, experiences.

I wanted them to like me.

Not all at once, but gradually, increasingly.

And at some point I wished to share what's going on in our lives, to build something together and to develop, do something meaningful together.

I wanted them to be part of my life.

I wanted a somewhat committed relationship.

What does that involve? What does that mean? I couldn't answer that question, except for „I don't know yet – it's up to us, we'll have to find out together.“

If I was in love, my friends asked early on in that process.

I was being very hesitant with answering. People assume so much with that phrase and since I don't do couple-relationships, most of the assumptions are wrong anyway.

I don't wanna buy people – it's not about property and control, but about relationships and communication, so where's the difference? And at what point does it matter if this is a crush or a friend crush, anyway?

Because when I start getting to know a person, I just don't know yet: I might really want to get in touch with them and be super excited about it – without any idea whether I'd like to be 'romantically involved' with them or not. All I usually know is that I really want to get closer with them and see how I feel about it and how things are going between us.

But was I in love here, at some point?

Well, yes, I was – in retrospective it's safe to say that I was.
Just don't overestimate what that means:

It wasn't so important after all, because it was just a rather small addition of romantic dreaming, desire, to the major part of a genuine, solid friend crush.

All the things I wanted and how I felt (like I described before) are not touched by the question of a 'romantic' crush. The difference between the two was really just a gradually increased intensity of these feelings and the strong wish for this to be mutual and special.

At some point, the moment came where it became clear that this was not going to be a rather romance-based relationship. (I even hesitate to write it like that, because lots of my friendships are romantic as hell: 'romantic' as in 'having romantic moments together' or as in 'admitting in a variety of ways that the relationship is meaningful and valuable'. But you know, 'romance-based' as opposed to the 'platonic', 'not being in love' labeled relationships.)

Isn't it super inconvenient, frustrating, to be in love with a friend who doesn't share these feelings for you? Well, it can be, of course. It's not like I'm looking for that kind of constellation. But also, it's not incredibly horrifying, either.

After I've passed these moments of disillusionment and disappointment, I usually realize two things:

First, it's not like I'd want to run from that person or drop everything we've built – there are so many positive bonds between us and still so many possibilities to develop together, neither of them related to 'romantic relationships'. At this point I really don't want to give up on that relationship just because a small part of my day dreaming won't come true.

The second thing I realize is this: all the things that have happened so far, everything the other person has done for me and all their interest in me and our relationship is still there. These experiences don't just suddenly vanish due to my new view on the situation. All that has developed between the two of us is still there – and is still valid. Even more, you could say that all what had happened was not done as an

'investment' for some e.g. romantic 'pay off', but out of genuine like, respect, interest, concern for me and our friendship. And as such it will continue. And as such I'll also stay true to my part of this friendship.

It'll be a bit tough or a bit weird for a while until I rearrange things within myself; I'll need some time to regain and sustain my trust – the trust that something (now definitely) called 'friendship' can be as meaningful and worthy of commitment to the other person as it is crucial to me.

I'll need some time. I'll struggle with it sometimes. But usually I come to the point where I do have that trust. I'll come to the point where I can value this relationship without any regrets – where I can fully embrace what we have, in the way it is; where I am happy and thankful for this relationship that I call committed friendship.

So now here's to you, my friend. This is our story (as well as my story with several others);

I am very happy to share it with you tonight.

Cheers to us.

[270416]

Small Manifesto. An Homage to our Friendships

Trying to Grasp how we Live our Lives

[This is for you. Once more I basically document our discussions' essence ... <3 The Annalist.]

Freedom
doesn't mean a lack of bonds to me,
it never could.

Freedom
lies in the conscious and passionat affirmation of bonds – bonds that are built voluntarily and mutual, bonds that connect persons who decide about the conditions together, time and time again.

Freedom
means to me the possibility to decide upon that over and over again without force (at least with as much space as social reality allows us to);
to put our real needs before society's pressure, before the psychological, emotional and material forces and repressions;
developing our own ways, in mutual solidarity resisting the systematical destruction of our relationships, ourselves, our utopia of the liberated society and oppression-freed life.

We connect our hearts, our lives and thereby our fights in unthinkable and often unexplicable ways, that are hard to explain, because they are not meant to be understood, not meant to exist.
But though we haven't been given any terms or language to describe and grasp our network of relationships, we still do live it. We might call it 'community of shared responsability' or 'structures of support', 'networks of solidarity' or just 'important persons to whom you relate'.

(As a hole not 'collectiv', since we are not a fixed group, but everyone is involved in several relationships that overlap only partly.)
We haven't developed a generally understandable and valid language for our ways of living, yet. But we try to speak and most of all we try to build and establish our lives in these ways, giving each other support and confidence.

We are not a project, we are a network of growing relationships that develops constantly and (differating in time and intensity) we organize together what usually is provided by the bourgeois heteronormative nuclear family – and much more in addition.

For us, freedom lies in the possibilty to live and shape these relationships.

Freedom lies in the reliabilty and support of these bonds, emotional and in organization.

Freedom, to me, lies in this bond of friendship, love and solidarity.

[May 2016]

Kleines Manifesto. Eine Hommage an unsere Freund*innenschaften

Ein Versuch, unsere Lebensweise*n (zusammen-) fassen zu können

*[Dies ist für Euch. Mal wieder dokumentiere ich hiermit eigentlich
nur die Quintessenz vieler unserer Gespräche ... <3 Die Chronistin]*

Freiheit

besteht für mich nicht in der Abwesenheit von Bindungen,
kann sie gar nicht.

Freiheit

besteht für mich im bewussten und lustvollen Bejahen von
Bindungen, die auf Freiwilligkeit und Gegenseitigkeit beruhen und
über deren Bedingungen und Formen wir, die darin Verbundenen,
gemeinsam immer wieder entscheiden.

Freiheit

bedeutet für mich, diese Entscheidungen ohne Zwang (bzw. mit so
viel Spielraum wie die gesellschaftliche Realität es eben erlaubt)
immer wieder neu treffen zu können
und dem gesellschaftlichen Druck, der Zurichtung und psychischen,
emotionalen wie materiellen Zwängen/Repressionen unsere
wirklichen Bedürfnisse voranzustellen – eigene Wege zu entwickeln
und uns so der systematischen Zerstörung unserer Beziehungen,
unserer Selbst, der Utopie der freien Gesellschaft und des
herrschaftsbefreiteren Lebens solidarisch entgegenzustellen.

Wir verbünden unsere Herzen, Leben und damit auch Kämpfe in
unvorstellbarer und oft unsprechbarer Weise, die schwer zu erklären
ist, da sie nicht verstanden werden soll, nicht existieren soll.

Doch auch wenn uns keine Begriffe, keine Sprache gegeben ist, um
unser Geflecht von Beziehungen zu beschreiben und begreifbar zu
machen – wir leben es trotzdem. Wir nennen uns vielleicht
Verantwortungsgemeinschaft oder
Unterstützungs-/Supportstrukturen, solidarische Netze oder einfach
wichtige Bezugspersonen. (Im Ganzen nicht Kollektiv, da wir keine
abgeschlossene Gruppe sind, sondern jede*r in vielfachen
Beziehungen hängt, die sich teils nur bereichsweise überschneiden.)
Wir haben noch keine allgemeinverständliche und für alle gültige
Sprache für unsere Lebensweisen entwickelt. Aber wir versuchen zu
sprechen, wie wir vor allen Dingen und allem voran versuchen,
unsere Leben auf diese Weise auf- und auszubauen, uns gegenseitig
zu unterstützen und Halt zu geben.

Wir sind kein Projekt, sondern ein Geflecht wachsender
Beziehungen, die sich stetig entwickeln und die in unterschiedlichem
Maße (und nach Phasen verschieden intensiv) gemeinsam
organisieren, was sonst der bürgerlichen heteronormativen
Kleinfamilie angelastet wird – und vieles mehr dazu.

Freiheit liegt für uns in der Möglichkeit, diese Beziehungen zu leben
und zu gestalten.

Freiheit besteht in der Verlässlichkeit und dem Rückhalt dieser
Bindungen, emotional oder organisatorisch.

Freiheit liegt für mich in dieser Verbindung von Freund*innenschaft,
Liebe und Solidarität.

[Mai 2016]

[Love & Politics]

Love

*my general love has always been addressed to many:
friends, family, people around me ...*

Love in particular

*as a specific desire
has (in my adult life) been addressed to an individual
when they were hope (symbol, connection)
for political development to me*

Sharing the wish, the longing

*to create something new from a bond
with the bourgeois couple-relationship:
planting the seed of something that will evolving transcend ourselves...*

i don't want to start a family though

*but be part of a movement
and with specific others create something new,
create ourselves in a new way
through the power that can arise only shared and between us.
Trust and shared dreams
can evolve only between people
who are connected by strong powers and feelings.*

In this love as desire

*I have always loved particular people as hope, symbol of movement
and by that as the ones they really are,
as the ones they and us can only become together.*

My desire in love

*for political movements, ideas
will stay inseparable
from my various connections and relationships
to the particular persons
who do live these ideas.*

[Liebe & Politik]

Liebe

*meine Liebe im Allgemeinen galt immer vielen:
Freund_innen, Familie, Menschen um mich ...*

Liebe im Speziellen

*als konkrete Sehnsucht
galt (seit ich mich erwachsen nenne) einem Einzelnen dann
wenn er mir Hoffnung (Symbol, Verknüpfung)
auf politische Entwicklung war*

Gemein mit der bürgerlichen Paarbeziehung ist mir da

*der Wunsch, die Sehnsucht
aus einer Bindung etwas Neues zu erschaffen,
der Keim von etwas Entstehendem, über uns Hinausgehenden zu sein*

jedoch will ich keine Familie gründen

*sondern Teil einer Bewegung sein
und mit konkreten anderen unser Neues erschaffen,
uns selbst neu erschaffen
durch die Kraft, die nur gemeinsam und zwischen uns entstehen kann.
Vertrauen und Träume des Gemeinsamen
können nur zwischenmenschlich,
als Synergien zwischen Menschen entstehen,
welche starke Energien, Gefühle verbinden.*

In dieser Liebe der Sehnsucht

*habe ich immer konkrete Menschen als Hoffnung, Symbol von Bewegung
geliebt
und genau darin als eben die Menschen, die sie sind, als sie selbst,
als die, die sie – die wir nur gemeinsam sein können.*

Meine sehnsuchtsvolle Liebe

*für politische Bewegungen, Ideen
wird untrennbar bleiben
von meinen unterschiedlichen Verbundenheiten
zu den konkreten Menschen,
die diese Ideen leben.*

*some space left ...
so what about you?*

2016

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feel free to read, copy & think about